AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 16, 2026

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 16, 2026

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2025–26 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL No. 1557

Introduced by Assembly Member Papan
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Ahrens, Alanis, Bennett, Boerner, Bonta, Carrillo, Connolly, Davies, Dixon, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Jackson, and Schiavo)

January 8, 2026

An act to amend ~~Section 312.5~~ *Sections 312.5, 21213, and 22651.08* of, and to add Section 28171 to, the Vehicle Code, relating to vehicles.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1557, as amended, Papan. Vehicles: electric bicycles.

Existing law defines an electric bicycle as a bicycle equipped with fully operable pedals and an electric motor that does not exceed 750 watts of power. Existing law classifies electric bicycles into 3 classes with different restrictions. Existing law defines a "class 1 electric bicycle" as a bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, that is not capable of exclusively propelling the bicycle, and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour. Existing defines a "class 2 electric bicycle" as a bicycle equipped with a motor that may be used exclusively to propel the bicycle and that is not capable of providing assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour. Existing law defines a "class 3 electric bicycle" as a bicycle equipped with a speedometer and a motor that, in pertinent part, provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and that ceases to provide

assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 28 miles per hour. A violation of the Vehicle Code is a crime.

This bill would instead define a class 1 electric bicycle as a bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, that is not capable of exclusively propelling the bicycle, and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 16 miles per hour. The bill would define a class 2 electric bicycle as a bicycle equipped with a motor that may be used exclusively to propel the bicycle, and that is not capable of providing assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 16 miles per hour. The bill would provide that, notwithstanding these definitions, an electric bicycle manufactured prior to January 1, 2027, that was equipped with a motor that is not capable of exceeding 750 watts of ~~peak~~ *continuous* power and otherwise met the legal requirements for the relevant class at the time of manufacture shall retain its classification.

This bill would authorize a cargo electric bicycle to be equipped with an electric motor with a maximum continuously rated power of 750 watts. The bill would define a cargo electric bicycle as an electric bicycle that is built with a reinforced frame and integrated rack or platform designed to transport goods or additional persons.

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This bill would prohibit a manufacturer from equipping, and a retailer from offering for sale or advertising, any device labeled as an electric bicycle with a motor that is capable of exceeding 750 watts of peak power. The bill would also prohibit a manufacturer from equipping, and a retailer from offering for sale or advertising, any device labeled as a class 1 or class 2 electric bicycle with a motor that is capable of exceeding 250 watts of continuous power or that is capable of providing assistance to reach speeds greater than 16 miles per hour. The bill would make a violation of these provisions punishable by a civil penalty not to exceed $15,000 for a first violation and not to exceed $50,000 for each subsequent violation, upon an action brought by the Attorney General, a city attorney, a county counsel, or a district attorney. The bill would specify that a violation of this provision is not a criminal offense.

Existing law prohibits a person under 16 years of age from operating a class 3 electric bicycle, and authorizes a peace officer to remove the electric bicycle being operated by the person. Existing law requires an agency to release a seized electric bicycle to the owner, violator, or their agent after a minimum of 48 hours if certain conditions are met,

including that the costs of removal, seizure, and storage have been paid. Existing law authorizes an agency to require, as a condition of release of an electric bicycle removed under this provision, proof that the violator has completed an electric bicycle safety and training program or a related local bicycle safety course, as described.

This bill would prohibit a person under 16 years of age from operating an electric bicycle with a motor that is capable of exceeding 250 watts of continuous power, and would authorize a peace officer to remove the electric bicycle that is being operated by the person. The bill would authorize an agency to require proof that the violator has completed an electric bicycle safety and training program or a related local bicycle safety course, as described, as a condition of release of the electric bicycle. Because a violation of this prohibition would be a crime, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: ~~no~~ *yes*.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 312.5 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

312.5. (a) An "electric bicycle" is a bicycle equipped with fully operable pedals and an electric motor that is not capable of exceeding 750 watts of peak power.

(1) A "class 1 electric bicycle," or "low-speed pedal-assisted electric bicycle," is a bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, that is not capable of exclusively propelling the bicycle, except as provided in paragraph (4), and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 16 miles per hour.

(2) A "class 2 electric bicycle," or "low-speed throttle-assisted electric bicycle," is a bicycle equipped with a motor that may be used exclusively to propel the bicycle, and that is not capable of

providing assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 16 miles per hour.

(3) A "class 3 electric bicycle," or "speed pedal-assisted electric bicycle," is a bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, that is not capable of exclusively propelling the bicycle, except as provided in paragraph (4), and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 28 miles per hour, and equipped with a speedometer.

(4) A class 1 or class 3 electric bicycle may have start assistance or a walk mode that propels the electric bicycle on motor power alone, up to a maximum speed of 3.7 miles per hour.

(5) Notwithstanding paragraphs (1), (2), and (3), an electric bicycle manufactured prior to January 1, 2027, that was equipped with a motor that is not capable of exceeding 750 watts of ~~peak~~ *continuous* power and otherwise met the legal requirements for the relevant class at the time of manufacture shall retain its classification.

(b) A person riding an electric bicycle, as defined in this section, is subject to Article 4 (commencing with Section 21200) of Chapter 1 of Division 11.

(c) Manufacturers and distributors of electric bicycles shall apply a label that is permanently affixed, in a prominent location, to each electric bicycle. The label shall contain the classification number, top assisted speed, and motor wattage of the electric bicycle, and shall be printed in Arial font in at least 9-point type.

(d) The following vehicles are not electric bicycles under this code and shall not be advertised, sold, offered for sale, or labeled as electric bicycles:

(1) A vehicle with two or three wheels powered by an electric motor that is intended by the manufacturer to be modifiable to attain a speed greater than 20 miles per hour on motor power alone or to attain more than 750 watts of power.

(2) A vehicle that is modified to attain a speed greater than 20 miles per hour on motor power alone or to have motor power of more than 750 watts.

(3) A vehicle that is modified to have its operable pedals removed.

(e) (1) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a cargo electric bicycle may be equipped with an electric motor with a maximum continuously rated power of 750 watts.

(2) For the purposes of this subdivision, a "cargo electric bicycle" means an electric bicycle that is built with a reinforced frame and integrated rack or platform designed to transport goods or additional persons.

SEC. 2. Section 21213 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

21213. (a) A person under 16 years of age shall not operate a class 3 electric bicycle.

(b) A person shall not operate a class 3 electric bicycle, or ride upon a class 3 electric bicycle as a passenger, upon a street, bikeway, as defined in Section 890.4 of the Streets and Highways Code, or any other public bicycle path or trail, unless that person is wearing a properly fitted and fastened bicycle helmet that meets the standards of either the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) or the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), or standards subsequently established by those entities. This helmet requirement also applies to a person who rides upon a class 3 electric bicycle while in a restraining seat that is attached to the bicycle or in a trailer towed by the bicycle.

(c) A person under 16 years of age shall not operate an electric bicycle with a motor that is capable of exceeding 250 watts of continuous power.

SEC. 3. Section 22651.08 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

22651.08. (a) A peace officer, as defined in Chapter 4.5 (commencing with Section 830) of Title 3 of Part 2 of the Penal Code, may remove a vehicle located within the territorial limits in which the officer may act, under either of the following circumstances:

(1) A person is operating a vehicle with fewer than four wheels that does not meet the definition of an electric bicycle set forth in Section 312.5 and is both of the following:

(A) Powered by an electric motor capable of exclusively propelling the vehicle in excess of 20 miles per hour on a highway.

(B) Being operated by an operator who is not licensed to operate the vehicle.

(2) A person is operating a vehicle that is a class 3 electric bicycle in violation of subdivision (a) of Section 21213.

(3) A person is operating an electric bicycle with a motor that is capable of exceeding 250 watts of continuous power in violation of subdivision (c) of Section 21213.

(b) (1) A city, county, or city and county may adopt at a public meeting a regulation, ordinance, or resolution imposing charges equal to its administrative costs relating to the removal, seizure, and storage costs. The charges shall not exceed the actual costs incurred for the expenses directly related to removing, seizing, and storing the vehicle.

(2) A local jurisdiction that has adopted a regulation, ordinance, or resolution pursuant to paragraph (1) shall publicly and conspicuously post the schedule of charges on their internet website.

(c) An agency shall release a seized vehicle to the owner, violator, or their agent after a minimum of 48 hours, if both of the following conditions are met:

(1) The owner, violator, or authorized agent's request is made during normal business hours.

(2) The applicable removal, seizure, and storage costs have been paid.

(d) If a peace officer removes a vehicle pursuant to paragraph (2) *or (3)* of subdivision (a), an agency may, as a condition of release, require the owner, violator, or the parent or legal guardian of the owner or violator to deliver proof that the violator has completed an electric bicycle safety and training program, as described in Section 894 of the Streets and Highways Code, or a related local bicycle safety course, if one is available, as prescribed by authorities in the local jurisdiction.

~~SEC. 2.~~

SEC. 4. Section 28171 is added to the Vehicle Code, to read:

28171. (a) (1) A manufacturer shall not equip any device labeled as an electric bicycle with a motor that is capable of exceeding 750 watts of peak power.

(2) A manufacturer shall not equip any device labeled as a class 1 or class 2 electric bicycle with a motor that is capable of exceeding 250 watts of continuous power or that is capable of providing assistance to reach speeds greater than 16 miles per hour.

(b) (1) A retailer shall not offer for sale or advertise any device labeled as an electric bicycle with a motor that is capable of exceeding 750 watts of peak power.

(2) A retailer shall not offer for sale or advertise any device labeled as a class 1 or class 2 electric bicycle with a motor that is capable of exceeding 250 watts of continuous power or that is

capable of providing assistance to reach speeds greater than 16 miles per hour.

(c) (1) Notwithstanding Section 40000.1, a violation of this section is not a criminal offense.

(2) Upon an action brought by the Attorney General, a city attorney, a county counsel, or a district attorney, a person or entity that violates this section shall be liable for a civil penalty not to exceed fifteen thousand dollars ($15,000) for a first violation, and not to exceed fifty thousand dollars ($50,000) for each subsequent violation.

(3) A prevailing plaintiff in an action brought for a violation of this section shall be entitled to an award of reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

SEC. 5. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

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